Sedentarization of the Bedouin in the Arab Middle East

Introduction

*166 In spite of the importance and magnitude of the issue, the problem of sedentarization has largely been neglected by experts on Middle Eastern Affairs, and no comprehensive study has yet been made on the subject.

The chief obstacle to an exhaustive treatment of the subject is the meagerness of reliable data. Trustworthy statistical information is generally not available for the countries of the Middle East, with the exception of Egypt and the Arab population of Palestine (Israel). The Bedouin, more than the settled people, have a deep-rooted aversion to any type of enumeration.

114 The writer has endeavored to consult the obtainable written literature, statistical, analytical and descriptive. While the material may be adequate for a discussion of sedentarization in general terms, a more detailed study must wait for additional factual data to become available.

The Role of Pastoralism and Agriculturalism

121 As this dissertation is concerned with the transition of societies, nomadic to sedentary, it is in place to sketch briefly the role of pastoralism and agriculturalism in the growth of human civilization.

COO Modern society derives its sustenance from farming, or stock-breeding, or both. Simpler people are sustained by hunting, fishing and the collecting of wild roots and seeds.[1] There is

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1. Boas, 1938, p. 282

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With the improvements of communication and construction of pipe- 369 178
lines there has been an ever-increasing mutual contact between the nomads and the settled people of village and town. While tribal shaikhs are the first to come under the influence of modernization, the tribesmen are also gradually adopting the mode of existence of settled society.

CHAPTER 1

Cultivation of the Area under Consideration

This paper will limit itself primarily to the problem of 361 121
sedentarization of the nomadic populations in the countries of the Fertile Crescent, that is: Iraq, Syria, Jordan (Transjordan) and Israel (Palestine), an area which distinguishes itself by its Moslem Arab majority,[1] its striking similarities of natural environment and social organization. Saudi Arabia was included in this study because of the inter-relations which exist between the Bedouin of the Arabian and Syrian deserts. Tribes of the Aneze Confederation wander from Saudi Arabia through Jordan into Syria and back and sections of the Shammar migrate back and forth between Arabia and Iraq.

Desert and Soil

The chief common natural feature of the area is of a geo- 132 133

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1. With the exception of the Kurdish language used by the Kurds in Syria and Iraq, Aramaic spoken by the Nestorian Christians in Kurdistan and in a few villages in Syria, and Hebrew spoken by the Jewish community of Israel, the area is Arabic in character.